

Marine Scotland Statement on Priorities

Marine Scotland

Marine Scotland is the lead marine management organisation in Scotland. It was established on 1st April 2009 as a Directorate of the Scottish Government, to integrate core marine functions involving scientific research, compliance monitoring, policy and management of Scotland's seas. Marine Scotland supports the Scottish Government's vision of having marine and coastal environments which are clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse. Marine Scotland is the statutory planning authority for offshore wind developments in Scottish marine waters, and, through Ministers, is also the marine licensing and regulating authority for the marine renewables industry in Scotland.

In January 2022, Crown Estate Scotland will announce the successful applicants to the ScotWind offshore wind leasing round and a new phase of offshore wind farm construction will commence in Scottish waters helping Scotland meet its Net Zero targets, become carbon neutral by 2045 and tackle the climate emergency. Marine Scotland is responsible for identifying where the ScotWind projects will be located in addition to administering the related offshore planning consents, and ensuring that projects are delivered in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The Scottish Marine Energy Research Programme

Marine Scotland has worked with industry, environmental NGOs, Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, and other interested stakeholders, to map out the gaps in knowledge when assessing the environmental and socio-economic impacts of offshore renewable developments, through our Scottish Marine Energy Research (ScotMER) programme.

The knowledge gaps and priority research areas are collated in 'Evidence Maps' for seven receptor groups: Ornithology, Marine Mammals, Fish and Fisheries, Diadromous fish, Benthic, Physical Processes and Socio-economic. The Evidence Maps outline areas of strategic research that will enable Marine Scotland to better understand the environmental and socio-economic impacts of offshore renewable energy developments, including wind, wave and tidal.

Links to ScotMER evidence maps

The streamlined version of the ScotMER evidence maps aims to show viewers, who may not be specialists, an overview of the evidence gaps and areas of research that Marine Scotland are looking to address to support development of offshore renewables. The streamlined evidence map document is available at the link below

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/streamlined-scotmer-evidence-map/>

The individual evidence maps for each receptor are available from the links below. Please note that the evidence maps also include gaps and priorities in relation to wave and tidal energy, which are not applicable to the ECOWind call.

- Ornithology <https://gov.scot/publications/ornithology-specialist-receptor-group/>
- Marine mammals <https://gov.scot/publications/marine-mammals-specialist-receptor-group/>
- Fish and fisheries <https://gov.scot/publications/marine-mammals-specialist-receptor-group/>
- Diadromous fish <https://gov.scot/publications/diadromous-fish-specialist-receptor-group/>
- Benthic <https://gov.scot/publications/benthic-species-specialist-receptor-group/>
- Physical processes <https://gov.scot/publications/physical-processes-receptor-group/>
- Socio-economic <https://gov.scot/publications/social-and-economic-specialist-receptor-group/>

WELSH GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

The Welsh Government's priorities around offshore wind (noting that energy over 350MW is retained by the UK Government, while environment and marine licensing is devolved to Welsh Ministers) and ecological interests include:

- Potential for displacement of existing fisheries effort, and ecological implications. Both within the license area and to areas where displacement effort is redistributed. Along with the ecological effects of this displacement what are the emerging socio-economic impacts in Wales.
- Ongoing and emerging cumulative displacement impacts on seabirds and marine mammals from multiple developments.
- As developments progress further offshore what are the potential emerging impacts and receptor species?
- What could realistically constitute biodiversity net benefit (net gain) for offshore wind developments in the future?
- What are the opportunities for co-location of activities and the ecological consequences of these?
- Do license areas constitute *de facto* exclusion areas to other marine users? What are the ecological implications, and potential benefits, of these exclusions, including the introduction of hard substrate?
- What are the impacts of introducing further cabling in the marine environment? What are the impacts of electromagnetic disturbance from cables on species and species movements?
- What are the constructional impacts on fish and feeding / movement with implications for catchability as well as a prey species? Where impacts are identified what are the potential recovery rates from this disturbance
- What are the polluting effects of zinc & aluminium going into the water from eroding sacrificial anodes that need replacing annually? How does this relate a) fixed OSW, b) FLOW c) transformers d) Hydrogen installations?
- What are the wider opportunities for utilising marine environmental data being created for the purposes of development consenting and ongoing monitoring? Recognising existing systems, such as The Crown Estates Marine Data Exchange, how can such data support future initiatives and national reporting (such as under UK marine strategy)?